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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper was to present findings from a study that investigated the ideal and real occupational aspirations (classified as Innovative, Moderate, or Traditional) among adolescent females with respect to locus of control and other social and psychological variables, e.g., parental education, mother's work and occupational status. Innovative occupations are those in which fewer than 30% of the workers are women; Moderate occupations are those in which 30-50% of the workers are women; and Traditional occupations are those in which more than 50% of the workers are women. The results of this study suggest that many adolescent girls are influenced by external and/or environmental cues in their real occupational aspirations. (Author/NG)

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OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATIONS OF ADOLESCENT FEMALES

Presentation

Conference for Association of Women in Psychology

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The young women who participated in this study were eleventh graders drawn from a suburban school located within the Syracuse, New York metropolitan area.

A questionnaire was constructed to obtain information about the participants' choice of an Ideal and Real Occupational Aspiration (Burlin, 1974). The first part of this instrument asked the subjects to name the occupation they would want to pursue if they lived in a society which offered unlimited possibilities for job choice and, therefore, they were absolutely free to follow any occupation they wanted, i.e., "Ideal Occupational Aspiration." The second part of the instrument began with the assertion that sometimes what one would like to do is not exactly what one must plan to do, and asked the subjects to name the occupation which they thought they would actually follow, i.e., "Real Occupational Aspiration."

A schema similar to the one developed by Tangri (1972) was used to further describe the "S's" Ideal and Real occupational choices. The Ideal and Real choice of occupation was classified as Innovative (occupations which include fewer than 30% women), Moderate (occupations which include 30% to 50% women), and Traditional (occupations which include more than 50% women). The 1970 Census of Population - Detailed Occupation of Employed Person by Race and Sex for the United States (1973) was used as the criterion for these occupational proportions.

Participants' responses in both their Ideal and Real choice of occupational aspiration reflected the three categories of Innovative, Moderate, and Traditional. The Minimum x^2 statistic (Grizzle, Starmer, and Koch, 1969) indicated that the participants made significantly different selections of occupations in their Real than in their Ideal Occupational Aspirations ($x^2_I = 34.41$, $p < .005$). In their Ideal choice 51% of the girls aspired to an Innovative occupation, whereas in their Real choice only 32% aspired to an Innovative level. The choice of a Moderate occupation decreased from 20% of the "S's" Ideal occupational aspiration to 12% of the "S's" Real occupational aspiration. The selection of a Traditional occupation greatly increased, from 29% of the Ideal choices to 56% of the Real choices.

Locus of Control

A chi-square test of association revealed the existence of a significant relationship between Locus of Control and the choice of Ideal occupation ($X^2 = 6.04$, $p < .05$). In order to determine which cell(s) contributed most to this association, partitioning was performed. This analysis indicated that the contribution of the External-Moderate cell to the overall chi-square value of 6.04 was 5.59 ($p < .025$). Thus, a strong relationship was found between externality and aspiring to a Moderate occupation in the Ideal choice. Many more externals than internals aspired to a Moderate occupation. Internals tended to aspire either to an Innovative or Traditional occupation; whereas, externals were distributed more or less equally among the three categories.

Although a significant relationship was not found between I-E control and the Real choice of Occupational Aspiration ($X^2 = 3.43$, ns), the same pattern of more internals than externals aspiring to an Innovative occupation held true.

A significant relationship was found between Internal-External control and the presence or absence of discrepancy between Ideal and Real choices ($X^2 = 16.93$, $p < .05$). Two associations stood out in the analysis of this data: (1) more internals than externals aspired to an Innovative occupation in both their Ideal and Real selections and (2) many more externals than internals moved from a Moderate occupation in their Ideal occupational aspiration to a Traditional occupation in their Real aspiration.

The young women who participated in this study were much more apt to aspire to an Innovative occupation in their Ideal choice of occupation than in their Real choice of occupation, and, reciprocally, these young women aspire to a Traditional occupation less often in their Ideal choice than in their Real choice. This suggests that the desire to pursue a broader range of occupations is present in the young women; however, personal and social forces appear to have limited their belief that in real life these occupations could actually be pursued.

When asked to choose an Ideal occupation, persons classified as internal on Rotter's Locus of Control Instrument were more apt than those classified as external to select an Innovative occupation. Furthermore, external persons chose Moderate occupations significantly more often than internal persons. This suggests that when asked to choose an occupation, freed of reality considerations, internals are less constrained by environmental cues. In those cases where they are not attracted by Traditional occupations, internals are more free than are externals to go "all the way" and aspire to an Innovative occupation. The fact that the external person perceives that powerful others or the "system" determine how well she can do appears to have limited her ability to aspire to an Innovative occupation. It appears that the external person, when not attracted to a Traditional occupation, is more apt than the internal person to choose the safer Moderate area where 30% to 50% of those employed are female.

The fact that externals moved from the Ideal-Moderate category to the Real-Traditional category is consistent with Rotter's theory (1966). The external personality does not see a relationship between her/his behaviors and the consequences which follow these behaviors. The external individual believes that the system, fate, or powerful others determine how well she/he can do. Therefore, many of those same externals who, when asked to choose an occupation freed of reality considerations (Ideal Occupational Aspiration), could only venture to the middle ground of a Moderate choice then returned in their Real Level of Occupational Aspiration to the safer and/or more socially acceptable ground of a Traditional choice.

Contrastingly, the internal individual believes that effort and reward are correlated (Rotter, 1966). Persons on the internal end of the continuum perceive that their own abilities or skills help to determine the outcome of their efforts. Therefore, it is not surprising that a greater proportion of internals than externals aspired to an Innovative occupation in both their Ideal and Real

level of Occupational Aspiration. The researcher asserts that these people were more able to free themselves from environmental constraints because of a belief in the potency of their ability to accomplish a rewarding goal.

Parental Education and Maternal Work Status

A chi-square test of association revealed the existence of a significant relationship between the respondents' Real choice of an Innovative, Moderate, or Traditional occupation and their father's educational level ($\underline{X}^2 = 14.77$, $p < .025$). In order to determine which cell(s) contributed most to this association, partitioning was performed. Significant association was found between father completing twelve grades or less and daughter aspiring to a Traditional occupation ($\underline{X}^2 = 4.67$, $p < .05$). There was also significant relationship between father possessing a college degree and daughter aspiring to a Moderate occupation ($\underline{X}^2 = 9.80$, $p < .01$). However, significant association was not found between fathers with a graduate or professional degree and daughters who aspire to an Innovative occupation.

The results indicated that there was not a significant association between the young women's choice of a Real Occupational Aspiration and their mothers' educational level ($\underline{X}^2 = 7.009$). Also, mother's work status (employed or not employed) was not found to be significantly related to daughter's Real Occupational Aspiration ($X^2 = 1.65$).

A significant relationship was found between mother's occupational status (categorized as Traditional or Non-Traditional) and daughter's Real choice of an Innovative, Moderate, or Traditional occupation ($X^2 = 9.42$, $p < .01$). In order to look more closely at the relationship between Traditional mother and Traditional daughter, partitioning was performed. The contribution of the Mother Traditional-Daughter Traditional cell to the overall chi-square value of 9.42 was 7.48 ($p < .01$). Therefore, much of the relationship in the original 3 x 2 contingency

table may be attributed to the strong association between mothers who work in Traditional occupations and daughters who, in their Real choice, also aspire to Traditional occupations and, reciprocally, between mothers who work in Non-Traditional occupations and daughters who aspire to Non-Traditional occupations.

If the assumption is made that father's educational level is a generally good indicator of socioeconomic class, these findings agree with those of Astin (1968). Higher socioeconomic status was one of the factors that she found differentiated between twelfth grade girls who planned careers either in sciences or in teaching and twelfth grade girls who planned to become housewives or to do office work. The fact that father's education but not mother's education was found to be significantly related to Real Occupational Aspiration lends further support to the assumption that it is socioeconomic status rather than educational level which is associated with the Occupational Aspiration of these adolescent girls.

The author suggests that some of the reasons why socioeconomic status appears to be related to a girl's Real Occupational Aspiration are: (1) the economic realities of availability or unavailability for higher education; (2) the degree of opportunity for role models in the nuclear family; and (3) the degree of opportunity for personal contact with people in various occupations, through neighbors, family, friends, and travel.

In terms of the influence of mother's work status (employed or not employed) and occupational status (traditional or not traditional), the results of this study suggest that the fact that a mother works is not enough in itself to allow her daughter to aspire to a Moderate or to an Innovative occupation. What appears to be crucial to a daughter aspiring to an occupation in which 50% or fewer of the workers are women is if her mother is currently employed in this occupational category. These findings lend support to the importance for girls of mother as role model in the development of their career goals. Yet, it appears that this is only one of a cluster of variables that exert influence on the occupational aspirations of young women.

Conclusion

The results of this study suggest that many adolescent girls are influenced by external and/or environmental cues in their Real occupational aspirations. Our culture's sex-role ideology has limited and continues to limit the occupational aspirations of many female adolescents. It is important that counselors confront this issue but it is not enough that they present young women with a wide range of occupational alternatives. The fact that the participants aspired to many Innovative occupations in their Ideal choice indicates that they were aware of these occupations. Counselors and therapists must assist young women, however, through individual and group counseling to act more freely on these occupational alternatives. Three strategies for accomplishing this suggest themselves. First, graduate programs must focus the attention of future therapists and counselors on their own sex-role conditioning. Secondly, counselors/therapists must alert their clients to women who are currently employed in a broad range of occupations as role models are vitally important to the aspirations of young women. Finally, as counselors continue to encourage the integration of career education into all levels of the educational experience they must be equally careful to ensure that this education is free of occupational sex-role prescription. These strategies should enable counselors and therapists to assist their clients to base their occupational choices on individual need and interest rather than sexual stereotype.

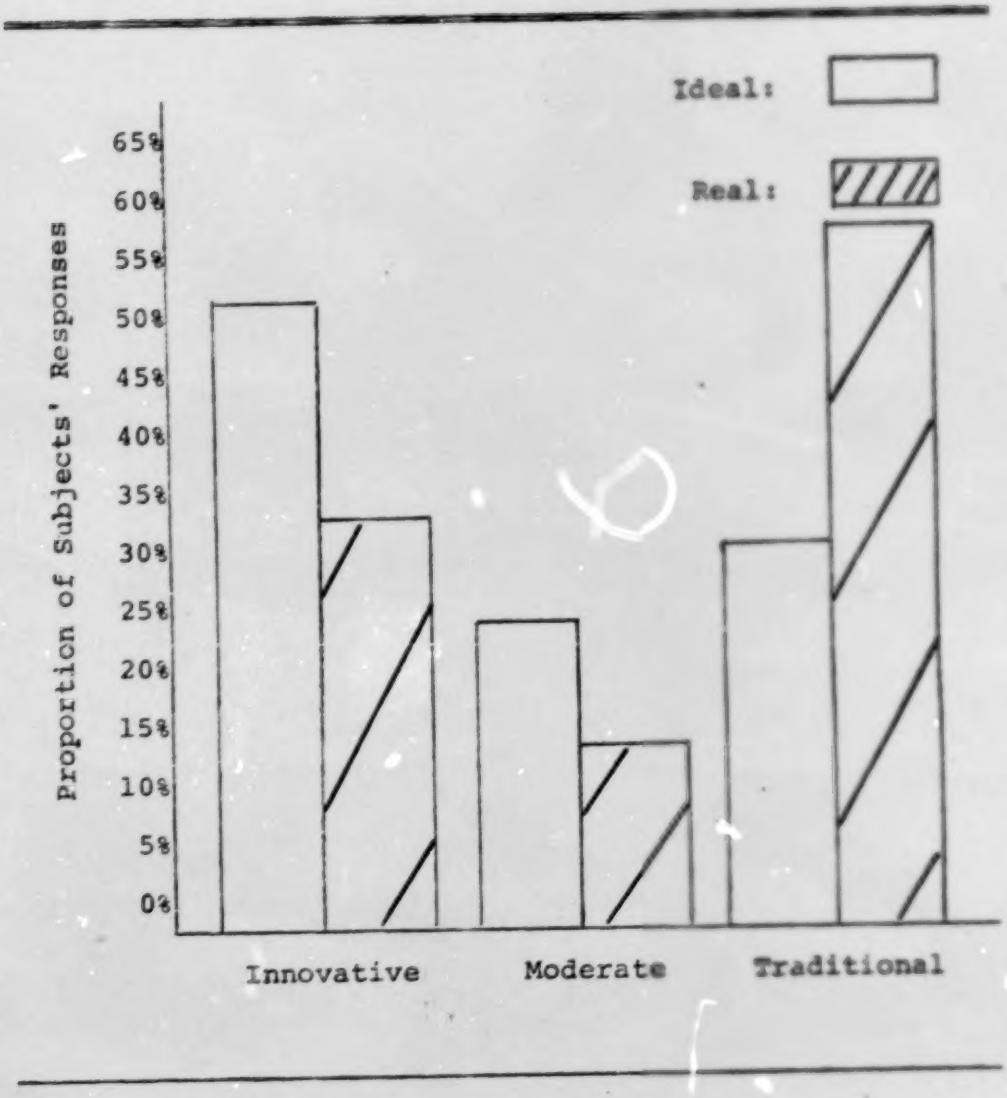
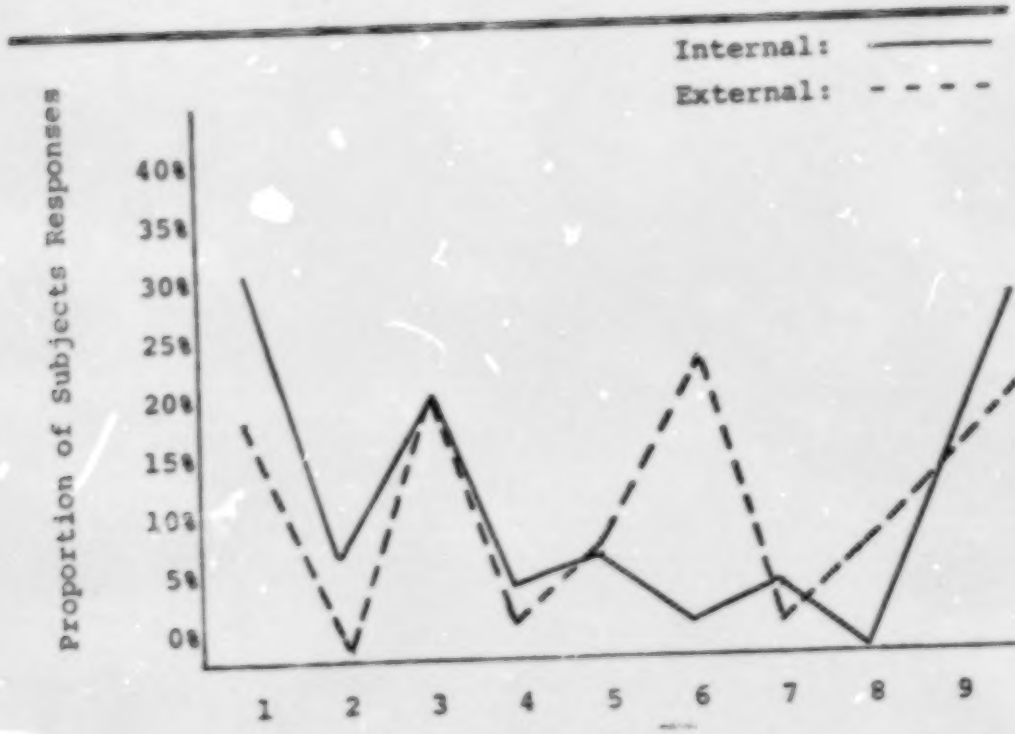


Fig. 1. Bar Diagram: Comparative Frequency of Subjects' Choices of Ideal and Real Occupational Aspiration.



	Ideal Choice		Real Choice
1	Innovative	-	Innovative
2	Innovative	-	Moderate
3	Innovative	-	Traditional
4	Moderate	-	Innovative
5	Moderate	-	Moderate
6	Moderate	-	Traditional
7	Traditional	-	Innovative
8	Traditional	-	Moderate
9	Traditional	-	Traditional

Fig. 2. Frequency Polygon: Comparative Frequency of the Presence or Absence of Discrepancy Between Ideal and Real Occupational Aspiration in Adolescent Females.

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